

# Timeline – Herricks and Leicester, England

Alice Herrick Reynolds May 5, 2026

Leicester is one of the oldest cities in England, with a history going back at least two millennia.

**Iron Age Celtic Settlement (200 BC-47 AD/CE):** Before the coming of the Romans to Britain Leicester was an important tribal center, with high-status buildings crowding the east bank of the River Soar. The native Iron Age settlement encountered by the Romans at the site seems to have developed in the 2nd or 1st centuries BC. Little is known about this settlement or the condition of the River Soar at this time, although roundhouses from this era have been excavated and seem to have clustered along roughly 8 hectares (20 acres) of the east bank of the Soar above its confluence with the Trent. This area of the Soar was split into two channels: a mainstream to the east and a narrower channel on the west, with a presumably marshy island between. The settlement seems to have controlled a ford across the larger channel. The later Roman name was a latinized form of the Brittonic word for "ramparts" (cf. Gaelic *rath* & the nearby villages of Ratby and Ratcliffe, suggesting the site was an oppidum. The plural form of the name suggests it was initially composed of several villages. The Celtic tribe holding the area was later recorded as the "Coritanians" but an inscription recovered in 1983 showed this to have been a corruption of the original "Corieltauvians" or Corieltavi. The Corieltauvians are believed to be a loose confederation of tribal groups and ruled over roughly the area of the East Midlands (including Leicestershire, Rutland, Lincolnshire and parts of Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Northamptonshire) during the late Iron Age. Living largely on small farms and in small villages, residents had extensive contacts with the rest of Britain and the Continent. Before the coming of the Romans to Britain Leicester was an important tribal center, with high-status buildings crowding the east bank of the River Soar.

**Roman (47-410 AD/CE):** It is believed that the Romans arrived in the Leicester area around AD 47, during their conquest of southern Britain. To verify this, in 2013, the discovery of a Roman cemetery was found just outside the old city walls and dating back to AD 300. The Romans took over the native settlement and established a fortress beside the river. The city name is thought to come from the Roman 'castra', or camp, and 'Ligore', a Latinized form of Legro, an early name for the River Soar. The Romans developed it into a crucial administrative center along the Fosse Way, featuring a forum, baths, and the surviving Jewry Wall. The best surviving feature of Roman Leicester is the Jewry Wall, one of the best-preserved pieces of Romano-British masonry in the country. The curious name has nothing to do with Jews, but came from '*jurat*', a form of 'jury'.

**Anglo-Saxon Period (410-1066)–** After the Romans departed in the early 5th century Leicester declined because of raids of continental pirates. Viking, Picts, and Scots towns brought in mercenaries from Europe to defend them from attack. These mercenary soldiers were Angles and Saxons from northern Germany. The legend of King Arthur is ascribed to this period. The Anglo-Saxons settled in the 5th and 6th centuries and took control. Celts were slowly pushed to the fringes in Cornwall, Wales and Scotland.

By 850, three competing kingdoms arose, including Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia and Wessex. Christianity replaced Roman-pagan influences.

**Viking Period (800-1066):** After numerous raids, the Great Viking Army invaded through East Anglia in 865 making wide territorial gains, and by 875 the kingdoms of Mercia and Northumbria had succumbed. Only Wessex remained as Anglo Saxon. In 878 King Alfred was forced to flee to the Somerset marshes. He was able to regroup and counterattack. His efforts and those later of his son and grandsons, gradually pushed the Vikings northwards and eventually to the sea. Queen Aethelfraed, sister of the deceased King Aethelred, defeated Vikings in 917 in Mercia and Leicester in 918. In the 9th century, Leicester was one of five boroughs established in the Danelaw; the Viking-ruled north and east of Britain. With time, Anglo-Saxon and Viking cultures and leaders integrated with the Aethelstan becoming the first king of a truly united England

By 955, Alfred the Great's grandson Eadred, ruled over a united England. Government became centralized and the king had the infrastructure to rule the whole country.

Then came a new wave of intense Danish/Viking attacks. The net effect was that the English king, Ethelred the Unready, found his kingdom under attack on all coasts by Norsemen. On Ethelred's death in 1016, the Viking leader Cnut was effectively ruling England. But on Cnut's death, the county collapsed into competing Earldoms under a weak king, Edward the Confessor.

The strongest of these earls was Harold, Earl of East Anglia. Through a series of battles and intermarriages, Harold controlled Wessex and was in a powerful position. So, when Edward the Confessor died in 1066 without a male heir, Harold claimed the throne. His claim was disputed by William, Duke of Normandy, whose claim to the English throne was even more tenuous than Harold's. Harold of Norway and his brother, Tostig, seeing a chance to regain a foothold, defeated the Norsemen near York, but then lost the subsequent battle to William of Normandy at the Battle of Hastings on Christmas Day in 1066.

In the 9th century, [St Nicholas Church](#) was built using stones scavenged from the Roman forum. In both the Saxon and Viking periods, Leicester was an important trading center, large enough to support six churches

**Norman (Medieval) (1066–1485):** Leicester was recorded by William's Domesday Book as Ledecestre. Shortly after the Norman Conquest of 1066, William the Conqueror ordered a [castle](#) built to ensure the city's obedience to Norman rule. [Leicester Abbey](#) (1350) and friary followed, and the city grew to support over 4,000 inhabitants by the 14th century. Several important medieval buildings remain, including the timber-framed [Guildhall](#), the Newarke Gateway, (c. 1400) and [Wygston's House](#), built around 1490. Construction of Leicester Castle began about 1070.

It was noted as a city (civitas) but lost this status in the 11th century owing to power struggles between the Church and the aristocracy and did not become a legal city again until 1919. Under the powerful

Beaumont and De Montfort families, the town grew. Simon de Montfort convened a parliament here in 1265. [Geoffrey Chaucer](#) was married here in 1360. Henry VI was knighted here in 1426 at the age of just five.

Herrick (Eryk) recorded in Leicestershire: See *Herricks in Historical Documents in the Early 1600's* for more details. There are 36 mentions of Herricks in Leicester records for this period. Birth, Marriage and Death records are not included in this count.

**Richard III & The Tudors (1485-1600):** King Richard III stayed at the Blue Boar's Inn in Leicester before his defeat at the Battle of Bosworth, after which he was buried in the choir area of Grey Friars church which was destroyed in 1538 during Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries. The property had several owners including Robert Hericke (who showed a monument resting on Richard III's burial spot to Christopher Wren (the architect's father), who recorded it in his diary. Later, the property was leveled and became a car park (parking lot.) Richard III's remains were famously rediscovered under the car park in 2012. The [Richard III Centre](#) stands on the site, and you can see where the king's body was found and view a reconstruction of his skull

In 1485 Richard III stayed at Leicester on his way to battle with Henry Tudor at Bosworth. According to legend, the king struck his spur on a projecting stone as he crossed [Bow Bridge](#). A wise woman foretold that '*where his spur struck, his head should be broken*'. Sure enough, when Richard's body was brought back to Leicester after his death at Bosworth, hanging over his horse's side, his head struck the same stone and his skull was broken.

Richard was reburied with full honors in [Leicester Cathedral](#) March 26, 2015, a stone's throw from where his body was found. The cathedral began as a simple parish church, dedicated to St Martin, and was only raised to cathedral status in the 1920s.

Richard III is not the only famous person whose death is linked to Leicester. In 1530 Cardinal Wolsey died at Leicester on his way to trial for treason by Henry VIII. The once-powerful Cardinal's body was buried at Leicester Abbey, where a memorial now stands within the abbey ruins.

Herricks in Leicestershire: There are 40 mentions of Herricks in City of Leicester records during this period. Birth, Marriage and Death records are not included in this count.

**17<sup>th</sup> Century (1600-1700):** Leicester supported Parliament in the Civil War, and as a result King Charles ordered a siege of the city in 1645. The medieval defenses could not hold, and Leicester was quickly overcome. The Royalist triumph was short-lived, however, for the king's forces lost the [Battle of Naseby](#) to Oliver Cromwell just a few days later.

Leicester was now attacked by Parliament, and once again resistance was quickly overcome, but not before Skeffington House, now part of [Newarke Houses Museum](#), was damaged. The medieval Newarke

Gateway was used to store ammunition and arms during the conflict, and ever since the gateway has been known as The Magazine.

Next to the cathedral where the king is buried, and Leicester Abbey, where the grave of Cardinal Wolsey lies undiscovered is the Guildhall, built around 1350. Within the timber-framed walls is a very well-preserved medieval council chamber and library.

A short walk from the cathedral is the medieval church of [St Mary de Castro](#), standing close to the medieval castle mound.

Near the castle is the Newarke Houses Museum, partly housed in the early 16th century Chantry House, one of the oldest buildings in Leicester. Across from the museum is The Magazine, built around 1400 as a gateway to The Newarke area of Leicester. A short walk from The Magazine is the New Walk Museum, housed in an ornately decorated Georgian and Victorian mansion.

Herrick records for the 1600's have not been codified at this date.

**Industrial Revolution (17th–19th Century):** The city blossomed as a major center for hosiery and shoe manufacturing, with transport links like the Grand Union Canal boosting commerce. During the 17th century, Leicester became known as a center for making stockings. Industrialization turned the cottage industry into a burgeoning woolen trade, and Leicester's skyline was a sea of factory chimneys. The industrial economy swelled the population to over 200,000 by the late Victorian period. The coming of the railway helped trade grow, but it also gave the working classes an opportunity to get away, and seaside holidays became popular.

The first entrepreneur to take advantage of the new mobility was Thomas Cook, who organized train excursions from Leicester and Loughborough. You can follow a Thomas Cook trail around the city, passing places linked to the famous tour operator.

**Modern Era (20th–21st Centuries):** Granted city status in 1919, Leicester became known for its immense cultural diversity—highlighted by its Narborough Road shops—and its 2016 Premier League victory. Leicester officially became a city in 1919, and in 1927 the medieval church of St Martin was raised to cathedral status. In 1940 severe bombing during WWII kills 40 people. Though growth slowed between the wars, the population was swelled again when Leicester became a destination for Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. More recently Leicester has become a destination for settlers from the Caribbean and Uganda, as well as the Indian sub-continent. In 2012 an archaeological dig discovers the remains of King Richard II in a car park where Grey Friars once stood.

**Places to see in Leicester:** We've mentioned a few of the major historic attractions already, from the Richard III Centre to the cathedral where the king is buried, and Leicester Abbey, where the grave of Cardinal Wolsey lies undiscovered. Directly beside the cathedral is the Guildhall, built around 1350. Within the timber-framed walls is a very well-preserved medieval council chamber and library.

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**Sources** - The following is information summarized from several sites including Wikipedia, the City of Leicester and a most excellent book by Morris, Buckley and Codd that provides the history and depicts Leicester in various times in history.

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